SENIORS ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR ALBERTA

Annual Report

2010 – 2011

Alberta

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Message from the Chair

Each year, the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta experiences an evolution of its work and contributions to public policy related to seniors in Alberta. Much of this evolution stems from members' gains in knowledge and experience and the fresh perspectives of new members on issues, challenges and opportunities.

The Council's work this year benefitted from the addition of three new members. Dr. Guy Gokiert joined as the representative of the Alberta Medical Association. As a retired family physician, past president of the Association and a former staff member at acute and long term care facilities, he brings profound knowledge about the front-line challenges facing seniors' care providers. Linda Scheibner, a farm owner and operator from the County of Newell, brings a wealth of experience with rural community organizations and an understanding of issues for rural seniors. Vincent Leung, a Chartered Accountant from Calgary, was instrumental in founding an acclaimed care centre for Chinese-Canadian seniors. I look forward to the ongoing contributions of these new members over the next several years.

One of the most important activities of individual members is gathering information on the challenges facing seniors and solutions to those challenges. This year, members participated in 81 visits and events in 25 communities. In addition, the Council toured facilities and met with seniors, service providers and various government officials in the Bassano-Brooks-Strathmore area. All these activities enhance grass roots understanding of seniors' issues and help build networks and relationships within the seniors' community.

Building relationships was the focus of a very interesting project conducted by one of our members this year. Laurie Lyckman, a member from the Southern Alberta region, partnered with a Ministry senior program advisor to visit seniors' organizations and facilities. The project facilitated additional networks and the creation of public awareness about regional service delivery and the role of the Council and Ministry staff.

I am pleased to submit, on behalf of the Council, our annual report for 2010 – 2011. It provides an insight into the hard work and valuable contributions of the Council members over the past year.

Sincerely,
Dave Quest
Chair
MLA Strathcona

Executive Summary

The Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta meets quarterly to discuss challenges facing Alberta seniors and develops advice on those challenges for the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports.

The Council reviewed its strategic business plan and discussed progress on key strategies and actions under that plan. This year, Council also approved and forwarded to the Minister pending approval, a proposal for information sharing between the Council and Alberta's post-secondary institutions. The goal is to develop more formal collaboration with these institutions to allow the Council greater access to existing research information and to promote research on topics of interest to the Council.

In June, the Council met in Brooks, Alberta, following a tour of seniors' facilities and seniors' centres in the Bassano-Brooks-Strathmore area. The Council visited 11 seniors' housing facilities and three seniors' centres on that tour.

At the following two Council meetings, Council heard from four organizations that serve Alberta's seniors. In September, the Calgary group DiversCT made a presentation on the challenges faced by immigrant seniors in Alberta. In December, the Council heard from the Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research on falls prevention, from the Alberta Senior Citizens' Housing Association and the Alberta Continuing Care Association on their priorities in providing services to seniors.

Council focused its attention on numerous challenges facing seniors. It provided suggestions for action on the following challenges:

- Priority challenges: the need for a long-term care facility in Fort McMurray; fraud and scam awareness; use of nurse practitioners; and the 21-day menu in long-term care.
- Emerging challenges: care for seniors with mental health challenges; the application process for accommodation in designated assisted living and long-term care; safety planning; preparing Albertans for aging; caregiver support; communication about dental coverage; and medication funding for long term care.
- Ongoing challenges: affordable housing; home care; facility audits; communications around seniors housing; sharing of best practices; Alberta Blue Cross coverage, in particular the shingles vaccine; health care aide training; transportation services; and assistance with forms for seniors.

Throughout the year, Council members participated in eight meetings or events related to consultations on the *Alberta Health Act*, the *Health Professions Act* and community service planning. These activities were part of numerous facility visits, information sessions, meetings and other events in 25 communities in which individual members participated.

History and Purpose of Council

The Government of Alberta created the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 1990, giving it the mandate to review, influence and make recommendations on government policies, legislation, programs and services for older people in Alberta. Its governing legislation, the *Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta Act*, introduced as Bill 1 in 1991, calls on the Council to advise the Government of Alberta and encourage public discussion and consultation on matters relating to senior citizens in the province.

As a strategic board, the Council has a vision, mission and values to guide its work.

Vision:

Seniors are one of Alberta's most respected and valued resources.

Mission:

Consult with seniors, seniors' organizations and others to gather information and provide advice to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports regarding seniors' needs.

Values:

The Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta holds as its values integrity, accountability and respect; and, through these, strives to enable Alberta seniors to maintain their dignity and quality of life.

The Council

The Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta is a 12-member body appointed by the Government of Alberta. Council members represent six geographic regions of the province. Members also represent Alberta's universities and the Alberta Medical Association. A member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, appointed by the Premier, chairs the Council. The current Chair is the Dave Quest, MLA, Strathcona.

Current members are:

North East — Diana Anderson

Edmonton and Area — Rosemarie Biggs, Beverly Homeniuk and Laurie Morris

Central — Dawn Parent

Calgary and Area — Vincent Leung, Harjit S. Rai and Linda Scheibner

South — Laurie Lyckman

Universities — Dr. Al Cook

Alberta Medical Association — Dr. John Guy Gokiert

Members serve for terms of up to six years. This year, the Council welcomed three new members: Linda Scheibner; Vincent Leung; and Dr. Guy Gokiert. Appendix B provides biographies of Council members.

In 2010, the Council moved to amend its by-laws to increase the number of members representing the regions of the province from 12 to 13. In addition, it is reviewing the university membership rotation, which is currently limited to the University of Alberta, University of Calgary and University of Lethbridge, in response to changes in Alberta's post-secondary sector.

Business Plan Priorities

The Council operates under a three-year strategic business plan developed by Council and endorsed by the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. It reviews the plan at every full Council meeting to track progress, engage in relevant discussions, set priorities and identify ways to increase Council effectiveness.

To achieve its core business of serving as a direct link between seniors and the government, the Council's business plan identified four goals for 2010 – 2013.

- Provide timely advice to the Minister on the policies required to meet the needs of seniors based on the information obtained either through proactive or reactive processes.
- To identify and understand successful national approaches to seniors' needs and issues and to ascertain where they might be applied to benefit seniors in Alberta.
- To improve public awareness of Council.
- To improve the quality of work and effectiveness of Council.

Goal 1: Provide timely advice to the Minister on the policies required to meet the needs of seniors based on the information obtained either through proactive or reactive processes.

A critical part of the Council's activities is the ongoing gathering of information, input and perspectives from seniors and those who provide services to seniors. Through visits to facilities, attendance at professional and community events and meetings, and direct contact with decision makers in communities and government, Council members determine what challenges exist or are emerging for Alberta's seniors. This year, the Council toured facilities and seniors' centres in the Bassano-Brooks-Strathmore area. In addition, members attended 81 events in 25 communities across Alberta. Appendix A of this report provides details of this work.

The Council also meets four times a year to discuss matters related to seniors and develop advice for consideration by the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. Often, service providers or subject matter experts on seniors' issues make

presentations to Council at these meetings. This year, four groups did so: DiversCT; Alberta Injury Control and Research; the Alberta Senior Citizens' Housing Association; and the Alberta Continuing Care Association. In addition, at each meeting Council received updates on government initiatives relevant to seniors.

This year, the Council Chair briefed the Minister on discussions, points of information and advice from the Council after each full Council meeting. The Council provided advice to the Minister in the general areas of accommodation, home care, medication coverage, transportation and communication with seniors.

Goal 2: To identify and understand successful national approaches to seniors' needs and issues and to ascertain where they might be applied to benefit seniors in Alberta.

In addition to maintaining its awareness of the needs of seniors in Alberta, the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta maintains awareness of programs and services provided in other jurisdictions, including new or amended programs and policy approaches, with a view to identifying potential approaches which may support the Alberta government in addressing challenges here. Council members participated in conferences and public forums, and one Council member attended the National Seniors Roundtable on labour participation among seniors and near seniors, and intergenerational relations.

In February 2011, the Council forwarded the Minister a proposal to promote information sharing between the Council and the province's post-secondary institutions. The goal is to develop more formal collaboration with these institutions to allow the Council greater access to existing research information and to promote research on issues of interest to the Council. Improved access to academic research and initiatives will enhance the advice the Council provides to the Minister.

Goal 3: To improve public awareness of Council.

A key goal in building the Council's ability to facilitate the exchange of information, challenges and opportunities between seniors and the government, is improving public awareness of the Council. This year, Council focused on creating and using opportunities to inform seniors and seniors' services providers about the Council and its purpose, and worked on building relationships with government officials and employees.

Opportunities to build awareness were supported by Council members through: tours of 19 facilities; attendance at 30 community events and meetings; and participation in 22 information sessions, forums and workshops. Council members also met individually with MLAs and municipal councillors to discuss their perspectives on seniors' challenges in their communities. Arno Doerksen, MLA for Strathmore Brooks, participated in the Council's Bassano-Brooks-Strathmore tour and was able to hear the input and suggestions provided by service providers and seniors first hand.

Strengthening the relationship with information officers and seniors program advisors from the Ministry of Seniors and Community Supports was a major focus for Council this year. Seniors Information Services staff accompanied the Council on the Bassano-Brooks-Strathmore tour. In addition, Laurie Lyckman, a member from the Southern Alberta region, partnered with a ministry senior program advisor to visit seniors' organizations and facilities. The project facilitated additional networks and the creation of public awareness on regional service delivery and the role of the Council and Ministry staff.

Goal 4: To improve the quality of work and effectiveness of Council.

Each regional representative on Council is tasked with contacting regional officials and service providers to develop a network. This year, Council members attended six meetings and events with Family and Community Support Services staff, four with elected officials and 18 with provincial or local organizations in their regions. In addition, members participated in eight meetings or events related to consultations on the *Alberta Health Act*, the *Health Professions Act* and community service planning. Participation in these events adds to Council members' knowledge of the current environment and challenges and allows members to share insights and perspectives on seniors' issues.

Increased participation of the Ministry's regional staff supported Council members in expanding their program knowledge and networks and increased the awareness among staff of the purpose and activities of the Council.

The Council also continued to use its ad hoc committee structure to develop points of information and advice to the Minister. The committees on Accommodation, Communications, Diversity/Elder Abuse, Medical Studies, Transportation and University Studies continued to build on the work they initiated last year.

Ad Hoc Committees

As they meet with seniors and seniors' services providers, Council members gather information on challenges and approaches relating to seniors, and potential solutions to challenges. Members provide this information to the Council's ad hoc committees, which develop reports and advice for the full Council to discuss at its quarterly meetings. The Council and the Chair review this information and determine what advice should be presented to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports.

The advice provided by Council to the Minister this year is presented below.

Accommodation

Priority

Nurse Practitioners

Nurse practitioners are trained to provide a range of patient assessment and care and are valuable assets in the provision of health care. However, the Council believes there is limited use of these professionals in facilities that serve seniors. It appears, few nurses are taking the extra courses required for certification, and, currently, there appears to be limited job opportunities that recognize the skills these professionals hold. There seem to be more nurse practitioners in urban areas. The prevalence of nurse practitioners may increase as additional primary care networks come on stream.

Council feels that there may be opportunities for nurse practitioners to practice independently in designated assisted living and long term care facilities to support the effective use of medical professionals time and resources for assessment and supervision of health care services.

21-Day Menu

Alberta Health Services has moved to a standard, 21-day menu in facilities it administers or contracts with. As Council visited facilities and met with seniors, it heard concerns about the quality of food under this menu, both in hospitals and long-term care facilities. Concerns focused on the lack of fresh items, local produce and ethnic foods. For seniors who reside there, food quality is important to their overall quality of life.

This was as a result of Alberta Health Services (AHS) undertaking an external review of the Provincial Menu Program in September, 2010. The findings were provided in a report in November 2010 and AHS commenced implementation of the recommendations in December 2010. AHS prioritized the findings into immediate, short term, long-term and ongoing planning. The priority for AHS is informing and actively involving residents/staff regarding changes.

Council provided advice to the Minister surrounding the need for a review of the 21 day meal plan and over the course of the year, Council noted that some flexibility in the menu was introduced, resulting in increased ability to provide ethnic and special event menus.

Council continues to monitor the situation.

Long Term Care Facility in Fort McMurray

The Alberta Government announced its intention to establish a long term care facility in Fort McMurray a few years ago. Currently, the third floor of the acute care hospital is used for long term care. With recent announcements about new oil sands projects, the area expects an influx of workers, who will be employed in high risk jobs, which will put even further strain on the available acute care beds. A long term care facility would free up acute care beds.

The Council encouraged the Minister to continue to work collaboratively with her colleagues in Cabinet on the building of a long term care/designated supportive living facility in Fort McMurray.

Emerging

Seniors with mental health challenges

Alberta's senior population is changing. People are living longer, and living longer with complex health care needs, including mental health challenges and dementia. Council has heard that many of the province's care and housing facilities do not meet the needs of these seniors, resulting in a shortage of suitable affordable housing which is appropriate for seniors with these conditions.

Council believes there is a need to increase the number of living spaces in designated assisted living and long term care facilities for patients with mental health needs and provide specialized programs and trained staff to meet their needs.

Application processes

Council has heard that the application process for entry to designated assisted living and long term care facilities is time consuming and frustrating for both staff and clients. Council encourages Alberta Health Services to work with its partners to explore a more streamlined and simplified application process for prospective residents. A streamlined process may also be more cost-effective.

Safety planning

Council has heard that there is increasing concern from seniors regarding fire safety in facilities, particularly in rural communities that depend on volunteer fire departments. Building codes and fire protection fall outside of the authority of the Ministry of Seniors and Community Supports Accommodations Standards.

Council agreed that there is a need for all facilities that house seniors to have: sprinkler systems in each room; that all stairwells are wide enough to accommodate disabled seniors; fire safety plans that include full evacuation of individuals which are practiced at least once a year, and that this practice be audited. These standards are in place for accommodations funded through the Affordable Supportive Living Initiative; however, Council suggests that other congregate seniors housing settings should also include these amenities. Council also encourages that the possibility of including this advice in the proposed building code amendments, where possible, be discussed with the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Ongoing

Affordable Housing

The Alberta Government is committed to a policy of helping seniors age in the right place. A critical component of this is ensuring there is an adequate supply of affordable housing within Alberta's communities and that seniors have choices in housing. Seniors have expressed concern about fees for service in lodges, designated assisted living and assisted living accommodations and uncertainty about what services are or are not included in those fees. These concerns may influence housing choices and deter some seniors from selecting accommodation that meets their needs.

Council feels that housing that promotes aging in the right place must be affordable and accessible to seniors, and that fees for accommodation should be tied clearly to services and be transparent.

Home Care

If the right place to age is in the senior's own home, home care is an essential support service. In rural Alberta, transportation costs can strain home care budgets, resulting in a reduction in available services. In addition, there is a need to consider overall staffing and related services, such as home and yard maintenance.

Council encourages the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports to discuss with the Minister of Health and Wellness the funding of home care services, taking into consideration the concept of activity based funding, where by regional costs could be taken into consideration, for example; the increased travelling costs of home care workers in rural Alberta.

Facility Audits

Continuing care and supportive living facilities continue to bring forward the issue of overlapping audits of their programs and services. Council has identified seven required audits for infection prevention and control, twelve for accreditation and three additional audits for facilities that provide continuing care or supportive living in combination with acute care. Audits are very detailed, take several hours to do and facility managers have pointed out that audits often result in the re-direction of facility staff from resident care to administration, leading to increased costs and inefficient use of human resources.

Council provided a briefing on audits to the Minister. The Minister has taken some concrete steps to address this issue.

Seniors' Accommodations

Seniors and their families need clear information on the types of care and services provided in different levels of accommodation, to help them make appropriate choices. In addition, they need to understand how to access the appropriate accommodation and to respond to changes in the level of care required.

Often, the terms and acronyms used to describe housing and care options can be confusing to seniors and families. They can also be confusing to service providers — as stated by providers during the Council's tour of the Bassano-Brooks-Strathmore region.

Council therefore encouraged the Minister to support the development of information that is easily accessible and understood by families regarding levels and types of accommodation available to seniors and how to access these accommodations.

Communications

Emerging

Preparing for an Aging Population

Alberta's population is aging, and this will place increased demands on the health care system and on seniors' housing as well as other support services. Encouraging Albertans to adopt healthy lifestyles in their younger years is an important strategy to help them reduce their health care needs and maintain their independence as they age.

Albertans also need to be financially prepared for their senior years. Studies have shown that there is room for improvement in Canadians' financial literacy, and that many people are not adequately preparing for their retirement.

The Council encouraged the Minister to discuss the need to enhance the promotion of healthier lifestyles for Alberta's seniors with the Minister of Health and Wellness. It also encouraged the Minister to discuss with her colleagues the need to develop communication tools to encourage Albertans to save money and plan for their senior years.

Caregiver Support

Many people who provide care to seniors are seniors themselves. A significant issue for caregivers is respite care and the inability to get help. The Council has heard that the lack of respite care may have health implications for both the caregivers and the individuals they provide care to.

The availability of respite beds in long term care centres fluctuates. As demand for long term care beds has increased, the number of respite beds available has decreased. Existing beds often must be booked months in advance, and there is no guarantee they will remain available. This is especially a problem in rural communities. However, there also does not appear to be a comprehensive current listing of communities with respite or day programs which would be helpful to those seeking services.

The Alberta Caregivers Association offers a COMPASS (Caregiver Orientation for Mobilizing Personal Assets and Strengths for Self-care) workshop program to give caregivers tools to help them take care of themselves and deal with the challenges of caring for a senior family member or friend. The association offers workshops through a number of partner organizations across the province, including Family and Community Support Services offices.

Council encouraged the Minister to assist the Alberta Caregivers Association in the promotion of its COMPASS workshops in support of caregivers.

Dental Coverage

Based on Council's discussion with seniors and seniors' organizations, many seniors are not aware of what dental procedures and treatments the Dental Assistance for Seniors program covers. In some cases, dentists perform procedures that seniors assume the program covers, such as fluoride application, and then the seniors receive an invoice for the procedure or treatment. The program publishes a brochure with information on coverage, but the information is often not specific enough to meet seniors' needs. In addition, dentists' offices need to provide clear information.

Council feels that seniors need better information regarding what procedures and treatments are and are not covered by the Dental Assistance for Seniors program. It encouraged the Ministry staff to discuss the issue with the Alberta Dental Association and College, Alberta Blue Cross and the Alberta Dental Hygienists Association to encourage their members to communicate coverage guidelines and details to seniors. Council believes this information would enable seniors to make informed decisions as to whether or not they can financially afford specific dental procedures and treatments.

Ongoing

Sharing of Best Practices

Council has found that many service providers have developed programs and print material for their communities as solutions to some of the challenges facing seniors. However, there appears to be very little sharing of information about those solutions, which would aid communities with a similar challenge in providing services and care to seniors.

Information technology creates many opportunities to share information. Alberta Seniors and Community Supports, through their website, provides a central and recognized point for seniors and service providers to go to for a range of information. This tool could be used more extensively to create links among seniors service organizations and promote the sharing of practices and information.

The Council supports the addition of web links on the Ministry's website to community-based services for seniors that are innovative, creative, and successful.

Diversity and Elder Abuse

Priority

Fraud and Scam Awareness

Fraud against seniors is an on-going issue. This year, Council became aware of a fraud scheme, in which a person would phone a senior posing as a relative in need of funds. As a result, the Council feels that the government needs to renew its anti-fraud education for seniors. It encourages the Minister to discuss, with the Minister of Service Alberta a mail-out campaign on fraud and scam awareness to all seniors in Alberta.

Emerging

Multicultural Health Brokers

Alberta's population is becoming more ethnically diverse. Immigrant seniors are a growing segment of the senior population and often encounter language and cultural barriers when dealing with the health care system. Some facilities have successfully used multicultural health brokers to overcome these barriers and access advocacy, education and counselling services.

Council encouraged the Minister to discuss the need for funding for multicultural health broker teams with the Minister of Health and Wellness, to help refugee and immigrant seniors throughout the province better meet their needs.

Medical Studies

Emerging

Medication Funding for Long Term Care Facilities

Long term care patients receiving acute care in hospitals are often stabilized on a medication that is discontinued, due to cost considerations, when they return to the long term care facility. The senior must then be re-stabilized on another medication, which may not be as effective or well tolerated as the one they received in the hospital. This can complicate their medical condition.

Council encouraged the Minister to discuss these types of challenges in long term care facilities with the Minister of Health and Wellness. Consideration should be given to funding the costs of medications for those patients stabilized in hospital and returning to long term care, so that the senior can continue on the medication prescribed in the hospital.

Ongoing

Alberta Blue Cross Drug Coverage

Alberta Blue Cross does not currently cover the costs of either the shingles vaccine or retinal photos. The shingles vaccine, such as the vaccine Zostavax, is a preventative measure that could save significant costs in other areas of health care, including the costs of medication to treat pain. As well, seniors often need retinal photos for diagnosis, treatment and management of problems such as diabetic retinopathy or macular degeneration and these costs are not covered by Blue Cross either. The photos can present significant costs to those with lower incomes.

Council believes that when Alberta Health and Wellness reviews programs and services for seniors, it should consider program funding to Alberta Blue Cross to cover the costs of shingles vaccinations for all seniors and retinal photos for those who are on the Alberta Seniors Benefit program.

It is Council's experience that seniors and seniors service providers often raise concerns about what medications are and are not covered by Alberta Blue Cross seniors drugs benefits. As new medications are being introduced, physicians may prescribe these medications before the province approves them for coverage. Therefore, Council asked the Minister to encourage the Minister of Health and Wellness to review drug coverage listings more frequently.

Medications can be a significant cost for low income seniors even with the co-payment. While the province provides some additional assistance with prescription medication costs to low income seniors through the Special Needs Assistance for Seniors, costs can still be a financial strain for some seniors, particularly those with a high number of prescriptions. The Council therefore asked the Minister to discuss the need for additional financial assistance for medications for seniors with the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Health Care Aide Skills Steering Committee

Attracting and retaining qualified staff remains an issue for many seniors care providers. The Health Care Aide Skills Steering Committee, comprised of Alberta Health Services, the Alberta Continuing Care Association, the Alberta Council on Aging, the Alberta Senior Citizens' Housing Association and the Health Care Aides Consortium, has done excellent work in developing standards and a curriculum for aide training.

The Council encouraged the Minister to work with the Minister of Health and Wellness to support the Health Care Aide Initiative, as developed by the steering committee.

Home Care

Home care services vary across the province, resulting in differing service levels for seniors with similar needs. In addition, if a person moves to another region, they often have to reapply for home care services. Council encouraged the Minister to encourage the Minister of Health and Wellness to examine the potential to have more consistent services and supports available throughout the province.

Transportation

Ongoing

Community Transportation Programs

Community and inter-community transportation for seniors remain a challenge, particularly in rural Alberta. While several communities and service providers have developed unique solutions, many encounter challenges such as a lack of private service providers and insurance requirements that restrict the use of volunteer drivers. Many communities are looking for more consistent services and supports for seniors who are without a means to get to larger centres for medical appointments or other engagements.

The ability to age in the right place depends on the ability to access supporting services, including groceries, pharmacies, medical appointments and social activities, having access to dependable transportation supports this concept.

The Council feels that a longer-term view is necessary. It therefore encourages the Minister to work with her colleagues to consider that the transportation needs of seniors are proactively addressed in policy-making and planning, to enable seniors to age in the right place.

OTHER

Ongoing

Assistance with Forms

In some communities, Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) programs help seniors complete forms for programs and services; in others, they do not. Whether the FCSS office provides this service depends on the mandate the municipality gives them. The funding is provided by the province to the municipality, which determines the priorities of the FCSS funding. Alberta Seniors and Community Supports seniors program advisors currently train seniors' services providers throughout the province and are working through their networks to address this challenge.

Council believes it would be beneficial if all FCSS offices provided these services. Council will continue to monitor this situation.

Activities of the Council

Seniors' Week

Each June, the provincial government declares one week as Seniors' Week across the province. In 2010, 76 municipalities joined the government in declaring June 7 to 13 as Seniors' Week. In addition, organizations across the province registered nearly 400 events to celebrate the contribution of seniors to Alberta's communities.

As part of Seniors' Week, the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports presented the Minister's Seniors Service Awards to five individuals and three organizations for their exceptional volunteer work for seniors. Over 80 people and organizations were nominated for the award.

Bassano-Brooks-Strathmore Tour

On June 15, 2010, the full Council toured seniors' facilities and seniors' centres in the Bassano-Brooks-Strathmore area. The Council visited 11 seniors' housing facilities and three seniors' centres.

Residents in these communities have access to a wide range of health and community services and activities, and housing facilities are generally well maintained and updated. The primary challenges include access to transportation, especially for medical appointments with specialists in Calgary, and the lack of a full range of housing and care options. Other concerns raised were the increased demands on staff at facilities as seniors' care needs increase, that existing facilities were designed for different standards and lower care needs, costs of medications, and the need for improved information and clarity in communications about seniors care, programs and services.

Presentations to Council

At its September and December meetings, the Council heard presentations from four groups that provide programs and services for seniors.

In September, the Calgary group DiversCT made a presentation on the challenges faced by immigrant seniors in Alberta. Presenters Marichu Antonio, Liza Chan, Yvonne Chiu and Dr. Daniel Lai expressed an interest in working with government on public policy development related to health care, social services, education and economic support. They noted the growing number of immigrant seniors in the province and highlighted the language, social and economic challenges they face. They also noted the contributions these seniors make to society, including child care, volunteers, workers and cultural knowledge.

In December, the Council heard from the Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research, the Alberta Senior Citizens' Housing Association and the Alberta Continuing Care Association:

- Marcus Gurske of the Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research presented on the Center's Seniors' Falls Prevention Program. Falls are a leading cause of injury in seniors, and Alberta exceeds the national average in hospital admission rates and costs. The centre's campaign has increased awareness and action to prevent falls, which should eventually lead to a decrease in emergency room visits.
- Irene Martin of the Alberta Senior Citizens' Housing Association outlined the role of that group as the representative of over 25,000 seniors in the province. Members' priority issues are home care, communication and health care contracts. The organization believes there is a need for: a single basket of services for home and personal care with adequate funding; bridging disconnects between systems; and for a single, comprehensive administrative structure for seniors within the government.
- Bruce West, Al Pierog and Iris Newman made a presentation on behalf of the Alberta Continuing Care Association, which represents owners and operators of long term care facilities, supportive living facilities and home care and support providers. The organization's concerns included: funding; lack of coordination of policies among departments; the need for planning that reflects both the increase in number of seniors and the increase in the number with complex needs; the need for upgrading of facilities to meet the increased needs and standards of today; and the attraction and retention of staff.

Key Successes

Strengthening working relationships with Ministry staff

The Minister of Seniors and Community Supports asked the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta to provide more information to department staff about its purpose and activities and to strengthen communications with Ministry employees, particularly those in service delivery roles. These employees can play valuable roles as information resources to the Council and as referral points for individual seniors needing assistance.

The pilot project in southern Alberta highlighted the benefits to both partners of a stronger working relationship between the Council and service delivery staff. For the Council, the project demonstrated that working with Ministry staff gave them increased access to information, more opportunities to highlight the Council and its work and access to wider networks and contacts. Department staff gained greater awareness of the Council and its purpose and the Council members gained a better understanding and knowledge of government programs and services for seniors.

Government initiatives that respond to challenges facing seniors

The Seniors Advisory Council of Alberta noted several policy initiatives and government activities that directly respond to challenges they have heard about during their sessions and discussions with seniors and seniors' groups. These include:

- As part of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day in June 2010, the ministry distributed *A Guide to Supported Decision-Making* and Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors fact sheets to more than 2,400 organizations across Alberta. Organizations also *received Safeguards for Vulnerable Adults Information and Reporting Line* and *FACE IT Elder Abuse Happens* posters.
- The new *Adult Guardianship and Trusteeship Act* introduced a standardized model of capacity assessment and expanded the types of health professionals who can act as designated capacity assessors. The Office of the Public Guardian delivered sessions for lawyers, legal assistants, health care professionals and private guardians on the new Act to increase public awareness.
- The government developed, and published in several languages, the *Guide to Protection of Persons in Care Act* and related fact sheets. The government provides these materials on line and in print. In addition, the government made several publications related to the *Adult Guardianship and Trusteeship Act* available in multiple languages, on line or by ordering.
- On July 1, 2010, the income thresholds for Alberta Seniors Benefit programs for dental and optical coverage increased.
- In November, the government released the *Aging Population Policy Framework* and the provincial elder abuse strategy, *Addressing Elder Abuse in Alberta: A Strategy for Collective Action.*
- Alberta Health and Wellness announced a new initiative to help seniors age in their own communities. The department committed $500,000 over two years to the "Neighbours Helping Neighbours" program. Pilot projects are underway in Edmonton and Jasper, and will be followed by projects in six other communities over the next two to three years.

Appendix A
Meetings, Conferences and Other Events

One of the key commitments of Council members is to stay informed on current and potential policies, trends, challenges and innovations in services and policies that affect seniors. To do so, Council: tours seniors' facilities; meets with seniors, seniors' organizations and service providers across Alberta; and attends relevant community events, conferences, forums and symposiums. This year, members of the Council participated in 81 events in 25 communities. These events were in addition to the facility visits conducted during the Council's Bassano-Brooks-Strathmore tour. The following table has details of these activities.

Location	Facility/ Organization	Reason for Visit
Beaumont	Beaumont FCSS*	Meeting
	Place Beausejour	Facility tour
Blood Reserve	Kainai First Nation Elder Association	Conference
Bonnyville	Health Advisory Council #5	Meeting
Bow Island	Town of Bow Island	Community Event
Brocket	Crowlodge Elders Society	Information session
Calgary	Alberta Health and Wellness	Alberta Health Act consultations
	Alberta Therapeutic Recreation Association	Health Professions Act consultation
	Calgary Catholic Immigration Society	Community event
	Calgary Catholic Immigration Society/ Kerby Centre	Community event
	Confederation Park 55+ Seniors Activity Centre	Seniors forum
	Confederation Park 55+ Seniors Activity Centre	Facility tour
	Calgary Connecting Seniors Cultural Centre	Community event
	Calgary North Hill Constituency Office	Meeting
	Clifton Manor	Facility tour
	Confederation Park Lodge	Facility tour
	Downtown Friendship Centre	Community event
	Forest Grove Care Centre	Facility tour
	Monterey Place	Facility tour
	National Seniors Council	Roundtable
	Newport Harbour Care Centre	Facility tour
	Park Place	Facility tour
	Spruce Lodge	Facility tour
	Valleyview Lodge	Facility tour
	Whitehorn Village	Facility tour
Camrose	Camrose Seniors Coalition	Meeting
Carmangay	Little Bow Continuing Care	Community Event
Claresholm	Porcupine Hills Lodge	Facility tour

Location	Facility / Organization	Reason for Visit
	Willow Creek Auxiliary Hospital	Facility tour
Coaldale	Barons-Eureka-Warner FCSS	Seniors conference
Edmonton	Alberta Blue Cross	Meeting
	Alberta Caregivers Association	Consultation and convention
	Alberta Caregivers Association	Community event
	Alberta Community and Cooperatives Association	Community forum
	Alberta Health and Wellness	Alberta Health Act consultation
	Alberta Health and Wellness	Alberta Health Act consultations
	Canadian Mental Health – Edmonton Region	Presentation
	Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council	Community information event
	Glenrose Hospital Social Workers	Meeting
	Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital Foundation	Community event
	Health Care Aide Skills Initiative Steering Committee	Meeting
	Health Care Aide Skills Initiative Steering Committee	Meeting
	Memorial Society of Edmonton and District	Annual general meeting
	Millwoods Shepherds Care	Facility tour
	Multicultural Health Brokers Cooperative	Information session
	Multicultural Health Brokers Cooperative	Public forum
	PRIDE Centre of Edmonton	Meeting
	Salvation Army Grace Manor	Facility Tour
	Seniors Association of Greater Edmonton/ University of Alberta	Community planning session
Elk Point	Alberta Council on Aging	Information session
	Elk Point FCSS	Information session
	Elkpoint Seniors Centre	Community event
Fort Macleod	Seniors Welcome Mat	Community event
Fort McMurray	Alberta Council on Aging	Meeting
	Alberta Health and Wellness	Planning session
Lethbridge	Alberta Health and Wellness	Alberta Health Act consultations
	Alberta Seniors and Community Supports Information Services Office	Seniors forum
	Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination	Conference
	Columbia House Lodge	Facility tour
	Lethbridge Elder Abuse Network committee	Meeting
	Lethbridge Family Services	Information session
	Nord Bridge Seniors Centre	Community event
Milk River	Barons-Eureka-Warner FCSS	Seniors conference

Location	Facility / Organization	Reason for Visit
Picture Butte	Picture Butte Seniors Organization	Meeting
	Piyami Lodge	Facility tour
Sherwood Park	Government of Alberta	Cabinet tour
	Seniors Advisory Council of Alberta	Community event
	Sherwood Park District of Commerce	Community event
	Strathcona County Council	Meeting
	Summerwood Village Retirement Residence	Facility tour
Siksika Nation	Siksika Elders Lodge	Facility tour
Smoky Lake	Alberta Council on Aging	Meeting
St. Paul	Alberta Health Services/Health Advisory Council # 5	Public consultations, Alberta Health Act
	Seniors and Community Supports	Workshop
Stony Plain	Seniors Advisory Council of Alberta	Community event
	Stony Plain FCSS	Meeting
Taber	Barons-Eureka-Warner FCSS	Seniors Conference
Tofield	Alberta Health Services and Tofield/Ryley community groups	Information session
Vegreville	Alberta Council on Aging	Meeting
	Vegreville Manor	Information session

* (FCSS: Family and Community Support Services)

Appendix B
Council Members' Biographies

The Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta is a government-appointed body. The Premier appoints the Chair, a Member of the Legislative Assembly; the Alberta government appoints other members by Order-in-Council. Council members include representatives of the Alberta Medical Association, Alberta universities and the six regions of the province. This regional structure, developed by the Seniors Advisory Council in 1997, maximizes the resources of the Council.

Current members of the Council are:

Chair:

Dave Quest
MLA, Strathcona

Mr. Quest was elected to his first term as a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) for Strathcona on March 3, 2008 and appointed Chair of the Council on March 11, 2010.

In addition to his regular duties as an MLA, Mr. Quest serves as a member of the Select Special Auditor General Search Committee and the Standing Committees on: the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund; Legislative Offices; Health; and Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing.

Mr. Quest previously served as Deputy Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and as a member of the Standing Committee on Private Bills.

Mr. Quest carried Bill 46, the *Stab Wound Gunshot and Mandatory Disclosure Act, 2009,* and Bill 60, the *Health Professions Amendment Act, 2009,* through the legislative process.

Prior to becoming an MLA, Mr. Quest was the general sales manager and shareholder of Petersen Pontiac and Beaverhill GMC dealerships. In 1997 he won a General Motors Dealer Award of Excellence.

Mr. Quest obtained a business diploma from NAIT in 1985 and served with the Better Business Bureau of Northern Alberta for 10 years, fulfilling various roles including director, chair and director of the Canadian Council.

Mr. Quest has been an active member of his community for nearly 30 years in a variety of roles, including: regional director of the Elk Island Provincial Executive since 1998; involvement with Friends of the Games fundraising committee for the 2007 Western Canada Summer Games; and coaching a Sherwood Park minor soccer team from 2002 to 2006. Mr. Quest also has his private pilot's licence and completed the Edmonton half marathon in 2007. He and his wife, Fiona, live in Sherwood Park with their son Jack and two dogs.

North East Region:

Diana Anderson
Elk Point

Diana Anderson has spent most of her career working to improve the quality of life for seniors and to dispel myths about aging.

Mrs. Anderson was the president of the Alberta Council on Aging and chaired the policy advisory and health committees. She also served on the Lakeland Health Authority board and on the steering committee to implement accommodation standards for supportive living facilities.

Mrs. Anderson has developed outreach programs for long-term care residents, worked with pastoral care groups and taught post-graduate courses in gerontology. She currently leads a program that brings youth and seniors together.

Her community service was recognized with the awarding of an Alberta Centennial Medal.

Mrs. Anderson became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2007.

Edmonton and Area Region:

Rosemarie Biggs
Sherwood Park

Rosemarie Biggs was a community pharmacist when she started a home visit program for seniors. She used her prescription deliveries as an opportunity to talk to seniors about their medications and how to take them properly.

Her community and professional involvement includes serving as president of the Alberta Pharmaceutical Association in 1996. She was re-elected as the Association's president in 1998.

Ms. Biggs has also spoken nationally and internationally and has received several awards in recognition of her work. The awards include the Canadian Pharmacists' Association's Pharmacist Care of Older Persons Award and the Pride of Strathcona Award for her dedication to patients' well-being.

Ms. Biggs became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2007.

Beverly Homeniuk
Vegreville

Beverly Homeniuk has served on several boards, committees and organizations at district, regional and provincial levels in the Vegreville region.

She has also been an outreach worker with the Vegreville Health Unit, where she developed and implemented visiting programs for the elderly and homebound. Most recently, she served in an administrative position with the provincial government, where a large part of her role involved providing support and assistance to seniors.

In 1998, Mrs. Homeniuk was awarded the Northeast 4-H Region Award of Distinction for volunteer leadership, and her family received the Edmonton Northlands/Alberta Motor Association Farm Family Award in 2001.

Mrs. Homeniuk became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2007.

Laurie Morris
Edmonton

Laurie Morris is a clinical social worker employed at the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital in Edmonton and works primarily in the area of geriatrics. She has extensive contact with seniors, their caregivers and families. An area of interest and clinical focus for Laurie is dementia and capacity assessment.

Over the years, Ms. Morris has been involved in a volunteer capacity with her professional association, with community social service agencies and organizations, with school parent advisory councils, and with sports and recreation events and associations.

Ms. Morris became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2009.

Central Region:

Dawn Parent
Lacombe

Dawn Parent has worked with several organizations, boards and commissions. She has also been a Lacombe town councillor for the past 21 years and has served on the Lacombe Foundation Board. Her work with the Seniors and Housing Authority Board and experiences caring for aging parents sparked her interest in working with seniors.

After retiring from her account manager position with a national bank, Mrs. Parent entered the real estate sales business, where she continues to work. She is also a past member of the Persons with Development Disabilities central region board and the Alberta College of Medical Lab Technologists board.

Mrs. Parent became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2005.

Calgary and Area Region:

Vincent Leung
Calgary

Vincent W. Leung is a Chartered Accountant and a passionate leader about seniors care and wellness in his community.

Mr. Leung was instrumental in the founding the Wing Kei Care Centre in Calgary—the first Chinese nursing home to provide culturally and dietary appropriate programming to its residents. Since the beginning of its operations in 2005, the Wing Kei Care Centre has won acclaims for meeting provincial and national standards.

During Mr. Leung's term as a member of the Senate at the University of Calgary, he participated actively with local and international communities.

Mr. Leung was the recipient of the Alberta Centennial Award in 2005 and the International Achievement Award from the University of Calgary in 2006.

Mr. Leung became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2010.

Linda Scheibner
Gem

Linda Scheibner has a genuine respect and interest in the issues that arise for seniors in the province, and she looks forward to being able to provide another voice for Alberta's rural and urban senior's populations. Mrs. Scheibner has served on many different boards and committees within the hamlet of Gem and the County of Newell, such as: Gem FCSS, the Gem Library Board, 4H, Newell Further Education Council and the Gem Community Association.

Mrs. Scheibner completed a Community and Youth Leadership program at Lethbridge College and is very active in her community. She and her husband own and operate a farm and feedlot, where she enjoys the benefits and challenges that are associated with farming and the rural way of life.

Mrs. Scheibner became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2010.

Harjit S. Rai
Calgary

Harjit Rai is especially interested in assisting elderly people and believes seniors can be active and healthy community members.

Mr. Rai is also a strong supporter of cross-cultural relations. He served as a director for the Calgary Multicultural Centre and as president of the Sikh Society of Calgary. He remains actively involved with Calgary's Sikh Society and the Deshmesh Culture Centre.

Born and raised in India, Mr. Rai has worked in general insurance, life insurance and real estate fields. He has been a real estate broker in Calgary for more than 20 years.

Mr. Rai received an Alberta Centennial Medal for his commitment to the community.

Mr. Rai became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2006.

South Region:

Laurie Lyckman
Carmangay

Laurie Lyckman is very familiar with issues important to seniors, their caregivers and families. Having been a director of a seniors lodge for over 20 years, she is keenly interested in how best to improve the quality of life of seniors and how to help seniors understand the options and opportunities available to them.

Mrs. Lyckman also helps fundraise for several health foundations, is a Reiki Master, and works with her husband on the farm.

In 2005, Mrs. Lyckman received an Alberta Centennial Medal for her contributions to the community.

Mrs. Lyckman became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2006.

Alberta Universities:

Dr. Al Cook

Dr. Cook specializes in assistive device technology and is currently researching the use of robots to develop and reveal cognitive and language abilities in children who have severe disabilities.

He received his Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering at the University of Colorado and his masters in Bioengineering as well as his doctorate from the University of Wyoming.

In addition to being associated with the Assistive Device Service at the Glenrose Hospital, Dr. Cook has served as co-director of the Assistive Device Center at California State University.

Dr. Cook is a professor in the Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology at the University of Alberta. He also serves on several committees for Alberta Health and Wellness.

Dr. Cook became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2008.

Alberta Medical Association:

Dr. John Guy Gokiert
Westlock, Alberta

Dr. Gokiert was born in southern Manitoba and moved to the Edmonton area with his family where he attended the University of Alberta. After medical school, he moved to Westlock, Alberta with his wife, Susan, where they had three children and where Dr. Gokiert ran a general practice until his retirement in 2009. During his career, Dr. Gokiert worked with the Alberta Medical Association (president in 1994-1995), the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta, the Canadian Medical Association and the Canadian Medical Protective Association.

Dr. Gokiert has always been interested in all aspects of medicine, particularly the care of the elderly. He was involved as president of the medical staff at both the acute care hospital and a long term care facility in Westlock as well as a medical examiner for the province. Dr. Gokiert was also a teacher for both medical students and family medicine residents at the University of Alberta.

Dr. Gokiert became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2010.

Government of Alberta

SENIORS ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR ALBERTA

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